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NATION

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The Battalion

Friday, January 22, 1993

Clinton pulls Baird nomination

Attorney cites continual controversy as reason for last-minute withdrawal

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Zoe Baird, under fire for hiring illegal aliens to work in her home, has withdrawn her name as President Clinton's nominee for U.S. Attorney General, the White House said early Friday.

"With sadness, I have accepted her request that the nomination be withdrawn," Clinton said in a statement released by White House press secretary Dee Dee Myers.

Baird, in a letter to Clinton, said "the continuing controversy" surrounding her nomination would impede her ability to reinvigorate the Department of Justice.

Baird said she was "surprised at the extent of the public reaction" to the controversy surrounding the hiring of two illegal aliens to help care for her child.

Clinton's statement said he received Baird's letter Thursday night, "asking that I withdraw her nomination."

"Ms. Baird is a gifted attorney, and a woman of decency and integrity," the president said.

Earlier, a combative Baird had rejected calls to withdraw as attorney general-designate despite rising public and congressional opposition. The Clinton administration had offered her muted support.

"Right now, Zoe Baird is his

alty Co., has since her nomination paid \$2,900 in fines and roughly \$12,000 in back taxes for employing a Peruvian couple. The wife cared for her son while the husband served as her driver and performed household chores, she said.

Baird... did disclose this to the transition team," he said. But when she met with Clinton, "I do not believe they had a discussion about it, no," he said.

"I do not know what level of detail he knew about the situation... We can find out absolutely."

On Jan. 14, Myers said: "It was fully disclosed. He (Clinton) considered it and did not think it was a problem."

"I've said that I believe that what I did was wrong, and I apologized for it," Baird said.

Sen. Larry Pressler, R-S.D., a member of the committee, said he believed her behavior would diminish her effectiveness as the nation's top legal officer, especially when it came to enforcing immigration laws.

"I'm talking about your credibility," he said, adding that his opposition was reluctant "You're my kind of person. I feel very badly about this."

Sens. Larry Craig, R-Idaho, had also announced he would vote against Baird do to his constituent input.



"With sadness, I have accepted her request that the nomination be withdrawn."

—President Clinton

Questions about the Baird nomination dominated the first White House news briefing Thursday by White House communications chief George

nominee," White House spokesman George Stephanopoulos told reporters Thursday afternoon as Baird underwent a second day of grilling by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Baird, 40, a \$500,000-a-year lawyer for the Aetna Life & Casu-

Stephanopoulos.

Quizzed about Clinton's knowledge of her lawbreaking before he nominated her, Stephanopoulos said the details and timing were "rather murky."

"I don't know the nature of his exact discussions on this. Zoe

Senate confirms 15 more appointments

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Senate confirmed 15 more top officers in President Clinton's administration with scant resistance Thursday, hurrying action to give the new president a fast start.

Ten Cabinet officers — including Ron Brown as commerce secretary, Bruce Babbitt at Interior, Donna Shalala as health secretary and Robert Reich at Labor — were authorized by voice vote.

Brown's vote came after a brief afternoon debate in which Republicans said they had resolved concerns over his lawyer-lobbyist relationships.

Babbitt's came just hours after a Senate panel had pressed him on his environmental ties, then approved him 20-0. Earlier, the Senate approved eight Cabinet secretaries in a single voice vote.

Five more top officials — including Rep. Leon Panetta of California to head the Office of Management and Budget — were approved, too.

The swift action left only two Clinton ap-

pointments hanging.

Zoe Baird, the nominee for attorney general was the only one who faced serious controversy. Despite growing public and congressional opposition, she had won a renewed commitment from Clinton's spokesman and had remained favored to be approved eventually.

Laura D'Andrea Tyson, Clinton's choice to head the Council of Economic Advisers, was being readied for confirmation by the Senate Banking Committee.

"The president and the members of his administration will be pleased by the prompt action taken by the Senate," said Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, D-Maine.

Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole, R-Kan., said of the nominees, "They've met the test."

"I'm pleased to cooperate with... the incoming administration," Dole added.

During the Brown debate, Sen. Trent Lott, R-Miss., said the former chairman of the Democratic Party had sold his stock and ended his association with several companies.

Those steps "helped remove a cloud that

might have been hovering over his stewardship" at the Commerce Department, Lott said.

"He has taken the proper steps," Lott said. "I have withdrawn my reservations... and any effort to hold up confirmation."

Other Cabinet secretaries approved Thursday were: Rep. Mike Espy, D-Miss., as agriculture secretary; former San Antonio Mayor Henry Cisneros as secretary of housing and urban development; Minnesota utility executive Hazel O'Leary as energy secretary; former South Carolina Gov. Richard Riley as education secretary; Disabled American Veterans executive Jesse Brown as veterans affairs secretary; and former Denver Mayor Federico Pena as transportation secretary.

Also confirmed were Florida environmental official Carol Browner to be administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, investment banker Roger Altman to be deputy treasury secretary, budget scholar Alice Rivlin to be deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget and lawyer and former Clinton campaign chairman Mickey Kantor to be U.S. trade representative.

Dole said Sens. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., and Robert Smith, R-N.H., wished to be recorded as voting against Shalala's nomination. Sen. Lauch Faircloth, R-N.C., wanted to vote no against Ron Brown, Dole said.



Brown



Babbitt

New White House focuses on Iraq

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — On his first day in the Oval Office, President Clinton said Thursday his administration would not flinch from military showdowns with Iraq following a fresh challenge. The Senate rushed approval of more of his Cabinet but hundreds of senior positions remained vacant.

After partying into the early hours after his inauguration, Clinton spent all morning greeting thousands of visitors to a White House open house. Well-wishers waited outdoors for hours for a

quick handshake and greeting from Clinton.

It was almost 1 p.m. before he paid his first visit to the Oval Office before moving on to the Roosevelt Room for a meeting with senior aides.

Clinton told them, "We just have to be dominated by high standards and clear vision and we ought to have a good time doing it."

His wife, Hillary, was checking out the Oval Office. She will have an office in the West Wing, the first time a first lady has had space there. A spokesman said she would be closely involved in

developing Clinton's health-care program.

Day One brought the first break in the military cease-fire extended by Saddam Hussein as a goodwill gesture to the new president.

Pentagon officials said two U.S. warplanes fired on an Iraqi air defense site after it turned its radar on them.

It was not clear whether it was an isolated incident or a calculated test of Clinton.

The new president said he was sticking with the Bush administration's policy, which called for instant strikes against belligerent forces and measured responses to violations of "no-fly" zones imposed in Iraq by Gulf War allies.

"We're going to adhere to our policy," Clinton told reporters. "We're going to stay with our policy. It is the American policy and that's what we're going to stay with."

Later, White House communications chief George Stephanopoulos said, "Everything right now is consistent with the

previous practice, and President Clinton supports it."

On Capitol Hill, the Senate confirmed nine of Clinton's Cabinet members and five other top officers.

Hundreds of senior positions remained open.

There was an air of confusion as Clinton's new team searched for telephone numbers, directions and a general plan of operation. Reporters were angry about restrictions on access to press offices that were always open in previous administrations.

Clinton will move quickly to revoke the ban on homosexuals in the military, officials said. An executive order is expected within a week.

Clinton also plans to act Friday on executive orders expanding abortion rights.

One order ready for his signature would lift restrictions on abortion counseling at federally financed clinics.

Another would end the ban on medical research using fetal tissue from abortions.

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